

Student Success Collaborative Background Information

The need: Although PLNU has generally strong retention numbers and many of its academic departments made good use of existing data bases to monitor student progress, the analysis done by the Strategic Enrollment Planning process beginning in 2012 stated as a goal to “Assess retention issues and their role in getting to 2,600 headcount (including improved prediction).” In addition to the concerns about retention, the university was also attempting to continue improvements to academic advising, provide academic success monitoring tools beyond the 2.000/probation model, provide resources for addressing the students with cumulative GPA’s just above 2.000—the so-called “murky middle”, improve the ability of academic administrators to monitor both student performance and faculty advising practices, and provide a common data and communications platform for university departments (Academics, Residential Life, Student Success and Wellness, Athletics, Student Financial Services, Office of Strengths and Vocation) who are invested in student success.

The plan: With plans for choosing a new ERP and implementing a new student information module still several years away, Jeff Bolster and Mark Pitts were tasked with preparing a plan and beginning to look at technology that might meet university needs, including offerings by Noel-Levitz, Education Advisory Board (EAB), and Ad Astra. In December of 2014, with the support of university Administrative Cabinet, the university signed a contract with EAB for its cloud-based Student Success Collaborative (SSC) and Mark Pitts and Scott Shoemaker attended an introductory conference in Washington DC. During the spring and summer of 2015, implementation teams from EAB and PLNU consulted on an implementation process, and SSC was introduced to faculty, academic administration, SFS, Athletics and various student success-relevant offices in Student Development.

Next steps: Although the SSC is still too new to be able to demonstrate institutional retention change, the implementation process to encourage that kind of impact is continuing: deans and department chairs are being trained in use of the SSC information and receiving regular reports on performance of students in their majors, members of Provost Council are monitoring student success data for the departments for which they have oversight, a common response template for addressing student challenges is being prepared, and the Office of Records is targeting students identified as needing “high support” for additional attention. In addition, also with the support of university Administrative Cabinet, the university has purchased an expanded set of features for SSC which, if other IT tasks will allow, should be implemented in fall 2016, and will included a communications suite that will allow all departments with potential impact on student success to communicate better with students and with each other.